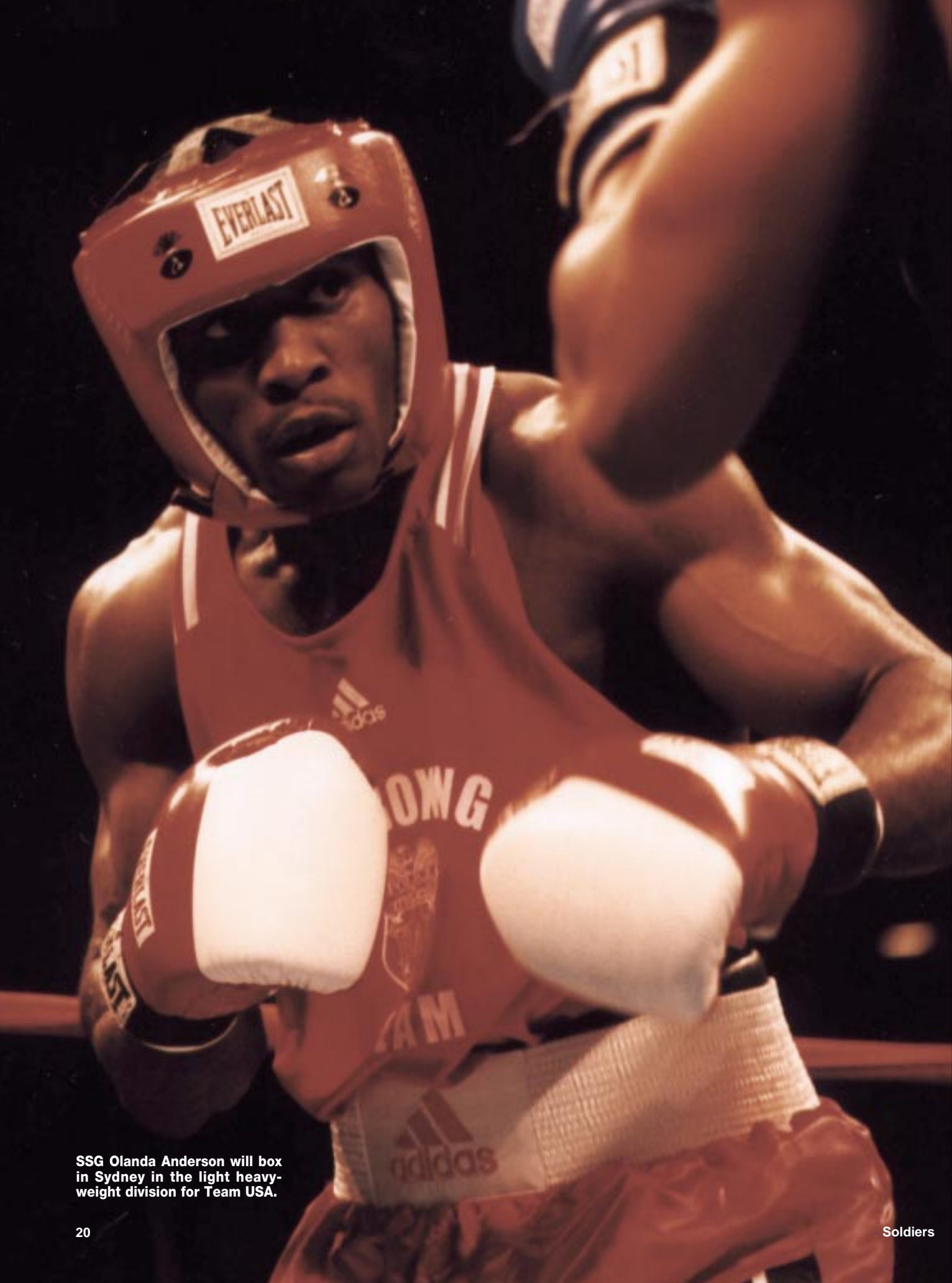


Soldiers

Online



SSG Olanda Anderson will box in Sydney in the light heavy-weight division for Team USA.

Soldiers in Sydney

Story by Sarah McCoy



SGT DeAndry Abron is an alternate in the 178-pound light heavyweight division.



Light welterweight SGT James Webb is also an alternate.

THE Olympic games in Sydney, Australia, are set to engage our world in a struggle among men, women and countries for the glory of achievement. The United States' finest athletes will test themselves through sweat and determination in hopes of winning all that an Olympic medal embodies.

It only seems logical that some of these athletes would come from the Army, because soldiers daily prepare for the mental strain of competition, the regimen of physical training and the commitment to excellence. A few have reached a level of achievement that will take them to Sydney for the summer games.

For most soldier-competitors the long and challenging road to the Olympics began with entry into the Army World Class Athlete Program, which was established in 1994 to enable the Army's athletically gifted soldiers to train in their sports during their time in service. Many of the athletes were first recognized in ROTC, university or military academy sports programs. They were assigned to the WCAP after completing basic and advanced individual training or commissioning and officer training.

Several Army posts are home to potential future Olympians. Among them is Fort Benning, Ga., site of the Army Marksmanship Unit. The Army sent 40 marksmen to the Olympic 2000 trials to compete for the 30 slots available. The number of skilled, Olympic-quality marksmen the Army produces is a testament to the intense training and support they receive. One example is SFC Thomas Tamas, who was honored with the 1999 Olympic Shooter of the Year title and will compete in the Olympics with nine other AMU soldiers.

Another center for Army athletes is the boxing and wrestling mecca at Fort Carson, Colo. This year Army SSG Olanda Anderson will box in Sydney in the light heavyweight division for Team USA.

"It really didn't dawn on me," Anderson said when asked about his initial reaction to securing a place on Team USA.

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Olympics 2000



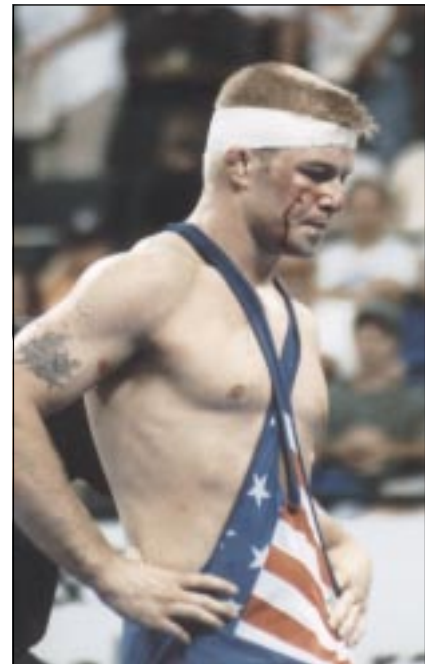


SGT Keith Sieracki (above, at right) will wrestle in the 167.5-pound Greco-Roman class.



SPC Dominic Black (above), seen here during a match at the U.S. Nationals in Las Vegas, is a wrestling alternate in the 213-pound freestyle class.

SGT Glenn Nieradka (right) is also a wrestling alternate, competing in the 138-pound Greco-Roman class.



“But today, when I woke up, I felt blessed. It feels good being an Olympian. Mr. Rob Coley [of the WCAP] kept telling me to stay in training camp. I’m in the Army, so you have to listen to your chain of command. If it wasn’t for them, I probably wouldn’t be going to Sydney.”

Two other soldiers — light heavy-weight SGT DeAndry Abron and light welterweight SGT James Webb — are

alternates on the Olympic Boxing Team.

In wrestling, one bright star trained by the Army and competing in the Olympics this month is SGT Keith Sieracki. He will compete with Team USA in the 167.5 pound Greco-Roman class. SGT Glenn Nieradka and SPC Dominic Black are Olympic wrestling team alternates.

As the summer games approached,

the Army had 77 men and women in 12 sports vying for spots on the U.S. Olympic team.

In the Olympic Track and Field Trials being completed as **Soldiers** went to press, the Army had 14 hopefuls.

Modern pentathlon requires athletes to master running, swimming, horse-back riding, fencing and pistol shooting. It’s another event in which soldiers



A Commitment to Army Sports

MANY Army athletes have competed in the Olympic games. Some have continued their ties to the Olympics by becoming coaches or administrators. COL Willie Davenport has done all three. Davenport is the chief of the National Guard Bureau’s Office of Competitive Sports Program and an Olympic gold medallist.

Davenport is a five-time Olympian, who brought home a gold medal in the 1964 and 1968 summer games in track and field. In the 1972 and 1976 summer games he again participated in the track and field games, winning bronze medals. His last

Olympic endeavor was in the 1980 winter games, in which he was a part of the United States’ bobsledding team.

Davenport now guides the young men and women athletes of the National Guard.

“I’ve been there, from a soldier to an athlete to a coach and now an administrator. Opportunities were there in this system,” Davenport said when asked how the Army’s athletic program had benefited him.

The World Class Athlete Program is available to train the Army’s future Olympians, but Davenport stressed that all soldiers should become involved in area intra-



As a modern pentathlon competitor for Team USA SPC Chad Senior will fence, ride and swim (above, left, center and right), as well as shoot.

CPT Jim Gregory (left) is the modern pentathlon team leader and first alternate, and SPC Brett Weatherbie is the second alternate.

have competed. SPC Chad Senior will represent the United States, with CPT Jim Gregory as an alternate.

"I thought I could either do it on my own, or for the Army," Senior replied when asked why he competes as a WCAP member. "If I did it on my own, all I'd have after the Olympics is four years of training as an athlete. Being in the Army helps your future. I think serving in the Army is certainly

an admirable quality, and that's primarily the reason I did it."

"I'm extraordinarily proud of the success that this WCAP pentathlon team has enjoyed," said Gregory after the Pentathlon World Championships in June. Both athletes train at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Knowing athletes can continue training and competing while main-

taining their military skills makes the WCAP ideal for many people who wish to pursue both their sport and a secure future.

This year, as the games get under way and the stars and stripes wave proudly over Australian playing fields, many of the Army's finest will struggle for the gold medals while representing the United States as skilled athletes and proud soldiers. □

mural sports. "Soldiers need to get involved in athletic programs because they foster competitiveness, teamwork, cohesiveness and general fitness," Davenport said. "To get into the WCAP, you must be a contender."

Wherever there is an Army establishment, programs exist to help soldiers participate in sports and sharpen their skills. "Athletically, you have to make it on your own to a large extent," said Davenport. "The Army will take you the rest of the way, but a major part is on the athlete."

When asked what advice he, a soldier and former Olympian, could give to young athletes, he said: "It takes the dedication to do what you want to do. Dedication." — Sarah McCoy



COL Willie Davenport (center) brought home gold medals in the 1964 and 1968 summer games, and bronze medals in the 1972 and 1976 summer games.